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Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict

Statement by the Chairman addressed to all parties to the conflict in Somalia

At the 9th meeting of the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict, held on 19 July 2007 in connection with the consideration of the report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict in Somalia (S/2007/259), the Chairman made the following statement on behalf of the Working Group:

The Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict

1. *Expresses* grave concern at the high number of children killed and maimed as a result of renewed fighting in Somalia, and condemns in particular the indiscriminate shelling of heavily populated areas of Mogadishu, as well as the indiscriminate use of anti-personnel landmines;

2. *Urges all parties*:

(a) To comply fully with international humanitarian law, inter alia, by protecting the civilian population, especially children;

(b) To recognize and commit to maintaining the neutrality and security of schools and hospitals as safe zones in conflict-affected areas, and in that context to refrain from any attack on such safe zones;

(c) To guarantee as a matter of priority complete, unhindered and secure access for humanitarian assistance, as well as international and national child protection actors;

(d) For those such as the Union of Islamic Courts and its affiliated groups which have been recruiting and using children, to release unconditionally all children present in any capacity in their ranks for reintegration in their families and communities, and to engage at the earliest occasion with the United Nations country team, in particular the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and, where appropriate, through non-governmental organizations in a collaborative partnership or in partnership with UNICEF, for an action plan with a view to putting an end to the serious abuses perpetrated against children and ensuring transparent procedures for the release of all children;

(e) To halt immediately new deployments of landmines, bearing in mind the serious threat that landmines pose to the safety, health and lives of children in Somalia.

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